

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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A DRAWN GAME.

BY BASIL.
AUTHOR OF "LOVE THE DEBT," ETC.

CHAPTER XXII. FOOLISH KISSES.

AT the close of the concert there was a rush for the train, into which, as it was the last, all strove to get at once. Dick only, with extreme difficulty and at the last moment, gained a third-class compartment, got his aunt into it, and was turning to hand in Ida, when a sudden surge of the crowd swept her backwards out of reach, and would have swept him away with her but for his hold of the handle of the carriage. Ida, borne away by the surging crowd, helpless as a feather on the tide, was brought to a sudden stand by a strong arm flung round her waist. She looked up to recognise Archie with a sudden pleasure, which he would have given the right arm that held her to know of.

"All right!" he shouted to Dick; "join you at Ryecote."

Dick didn't think it all right at all; but as, if he trusted himself again in the crowd, he would almost certainly have lost his aunt without recovering Ida, he submitted sulkily to fate, and followed Mrs. Tuck into the carriage.

"You're not frightened?" said Archie in a tender tone of protection that thrilled Ida.

"Frightened!" she echoed, looking up at him with trustful eyes.

"If you'll allow me to keep my arm round you, we shall manage it."

Truly Ida was not in the least inclined to cry, "Unhand me, sirrah!" Still, they didn't manage it, since it was unmanageable. The railway authorities finding it impossible to pack fifteen hundred passengers into a train calculated to hold six hundred, were forced to marshal what

carriages they could muster into a relief special. Meantime they dispatched the first, containing Dick and his aunt, while Ida and Archie had to wait for the second. They got at last into a second-class compartment, which being in the rear of the train, was not uncomfortably crowded.

"It's always safest to be in the last carriage of the last train," said Archie jocosely; "you can't be run into, and if you run in you're farthest from the shock."

"Were you ever in an accident, Archie?"

It was pleasant to Ida to think and talk as though the old times had come back.

"Yes, twice; and both times I was with Ben on the engine. We were running north, down Retford Bank under steam, at between forty and fifty miles an hour, when we saw a goods going east from Sheffield to Lincoln, right across our line at the level crossing. He couldn't stop in time, so what do you think Ben did?" he asked with boyish gusto.

"Put on the brake?"

"Put on the steam. 'Hold fast, my lad!' he said to me, as coolly as I say it now, while he opened the regulator to the full, and the engine leaped forward like a lion on its prey, and went clean through the goods, as through a paper-hoop. I hardly felt the shock, and not a passenger in the train knew he'd been in collision. Then, as he eased the engine a bit, Ben said to me in just the same tone, and as though in continuation, 'Them goods braid of* women, Master Archie. They're allus in t' road; an' if thee tries to parley-vous wi' 'em an' that, thee'rt knocked ovver, sewer as a gun.

* "Braid of"—i.e. are like.

There's nowt for it but to clear 'em clean aat o' gait.' And he was right, too. I mean as regards the goods, not the other baggage," said Archie smiling. "If he'd slowed instead of sharpening the pace, and so struck the goods with less force, he'd have knocked the waggons over, instead of cutting through them, and probably sent us off the road down the bank."

"It's a terrible life," said Ida gravely, thinking, we must confess, less of Ben's than of Archie's exposure to peril. "Was the other as bad as that?"

"Oh, the other was nothing. Ben, who, I think, is the kindest-hearted man that ever lived," said Archie enthusiastically, "had just got home after a hard day's work when the wife of a goods driver came to say that her husband, whose train was due out in five minutes, was helplessly drunk. What was she to do? The man would certainly lose his place, and her six children would be left without bread. Where was his mate? Oh, his mate was worse than himself; they'd been working a Scarborough excursion up to three o'clock that morning, and had got heavily tipped and spent it in drink. 'Tha'lt bear a hand here, Master Archie?' said Ben to me, and very proud I was to be his stoker. Within five minutes we were steaming out of the goods-yard, and all went well till we came to Crossleigh Junction, where we were stopped by fog-signals, for there was a dense fog. In about ten minutes our guard came lounging up for a chat, and then we found that he'd been drinking also, though he could stand it better than the other two."

"Thee'st put daan fog-signals, Billy?" asked Ben.

"Nay, there were signals eneu. There was Bankside distant and Lower Crossleigh home——" A wild whistle cut him short.

"Jump!" shouted Ben, but, as he spoke, the express crashed through the brake and fourteen or fifteen waggons."

"Were many people killed?" gasped Ida.

"No one was seriously hurt, or seemed to make much of it either. When Ben had waddled back to the wreckage, he said with a grin to the driver of the express who had run half through us, 'There's a matter of twenty waggons to get through yet, George; two on 'em powder, aw reckon. If thee'st still i' t' mind to be first, thee'lt find it gainer to back aat and wark raand by Saltsea,' that is, forty miles round. Those are my two accidents," concluded Archie, "and they'd hardly count in the trade."

Then Archie tried to get Ida to talk of such of her affairs as might be discussed before others, yet with an ominous fascination she would return again and again to railway life and its accidents.

"I wish you would give it up," she said earnestly, at last.

"Oh, I don't go often now. Besides, the engine, after all, is about the safest place. You are the first to see the danger. Then, if you choose to chance it and stick to her, the weight of the engine saves you half the shock; while, if you like, you can leap off. Boxed up here in a carriage you can see and do nothing."

"Do you get no warning of danger in a carriage?"

"You may hear three sharp whistles, but before——"

They sounded as he spoke, and he had time only to fling his arm round Ida and fix his feet firmly against the opposite seat when the crash came, and both were flung together sharply forward and back again as sharply.

"You're not hurt?"

"No," said Ida, a little confused by the shock.

"Thank Heaven! I'm afraid it's a bad business," as heartrending shrieks were heard from the front.

"Mrs. Tuck!" exclaimed Ida, when she came to realise what had happened.

"It mayn't be her train," he said, though knowing well it must be. "But if it is, she's well in front, and as safe as we are. I may be of some use, Ida; I must get out."

"I might do something?" appealingly, for the cries of fear and pain wrung her heart.

"You'd better not come, Ida. You'll be so upset and unnerved. I don't know that you will, though," he said impulsively, gathering this new idea of her from the expression of her face, on which he was gazing. "No; you'll be better for doing something, if there's anything to be done." So saying he helped her out on to the line, and they hurried together to the front. It was a bad business. No one in their train was seriously injured, except the driver and stoker who had leaped off. The driver was killed—impaled on a points lever which moved a switch serving to connect the up and down lines; and the stoker was badly injured internally. With these exceptions no one in their train was hurt seriously; but five of the passengers in the rear of the first train were killed outright, and many more

were mortally injured, or maimed for life. Mrs. Tuck and Dick, however, escaped the collision altogether in this way :

The accident happened at the foot of a long and rather steep incline about thirty miles from Woolstenholme. Here the driver of the first special was brought to a stand, by finding the load too heavy for his engine with the rails in the greasy state in which they were that night. After consultation with the guard, he decided to divide the train, and take it up in two detachments as far as the little wayside station of Denton, where there was a loop-line. Just, however, as he had got the first half of the train into the loop, and was uncoupling his engine to run back for the second, the collision occurred. The two signalmen, with whom the blame was afterwards found to rest, had taken the first part of the train for the whole—neither of them having looked out for the tail-lights. When, then, the relief special came up, and whistled for the red light to be pulled off, the signalman, having just got "line clear" from the next box, showed a white light, and the second train telescoped the latter half of the first. But Mrs. Tuck and Dick were safe at Denton in the first half.

This Archie soon ascertained, and reassured Ida as to their safety. Then, finding guard and signalman too bewildered to do more than block both lines, he at once took the command into his own hands. He telegraphed to Woolstenholme for doctors, etc., and got the reply, after the interval it took to waken the station-master, that there was no engine in steam to take them on. Now, as both lines were fouled with the debris of the accident, the engine of the first special was cut off from them. After a moment's thought, Archie questioned the signalman as to the cross-over connections between the up and down lines, and found that the points lever, which had impaled the poor driver, worked a switch that would get the engine of the second special on to the down line, and that four miles farther back were another cross-over road and a points lever, which would work it back to the up-line, and so get it round to the rear of the train. Running down the steps of the box he examined the engine, and found it battered, but so far as he could see, not materially injured. Thence he hurried to the guard, who was making a fire out of the fragments of the carriages, and got his help first to keep passengers out of the way, while he backed the train clear of the

points—then to uncouple the engine, and turn it on to the down line. This done, he bid the guard (who, like the signalman, took him for the chief engineer of some railway company, if not of their own) have the dead and wounded lifted gently into the relief special, which he would get to the rear of in a quarter of an hour, and drive back to Woolstenholme if he could get a stoker. But here was a hitch. All were too unnerved by the accident to volunteer for a service which would take them on the wrong line. It was no use for Archie to explain that the telegraph would keep it clear.

"Oh, Archie, could I do it?" asked Ida in an imploring tone. If it is necessary to explain her request and its passionate tone, we may say that at the moment she had turned away from a scene which haunted her for long enough after. A poor fellow, with both his legs crushed to the thighs, under a mass of wreckage, held up in his arms above his head his little girl—safe. When Ida took her from his arms he asked anxiously :

"Shoo's noan so ill hurt, is shoo?"

"She's not hurt at all, I think—are you, dear? No, she's not the least hurt; but you——"

"Eh, aw thowt shoo war lamed," he said with a happy look of relief in his face.

"No, no; she's not hurt at all, not at all," sobbed Ida; "but you——"

"Nay, it's ovver wi' me. Aw'm mashed up, aw am, an' reet." At this point the child's aunt, who had got separated from them in the crush at Woolstenholme, and who being higher up in the train, escaped with a shaking, came up, took the child from Ida, and while she covered it with kisses, moaned piteously over its father.

"Eh, Jem, Jem—eh, my puir lad!"

"Tha mun tak' her aat o' seet, Maggie. Shoo's that tender, tha knaws, that shoo'll be flayed wi' studyin' on it."* And so the poor fellow—who hadn't, and knew he hadn't, many more minutes to live—lobbed himself of a last kiss from his child, in the fear that the scene might haunt her ever after.

Such sights, making Ida feel intensely a sense of helplessness and a longing to help, account for her entreaty to Archie :

"Oh, Archie, could I do it?"

"You!" then, after a moment: "Yes, you could. You can do the little I want."

* "Flayed wi' studyin' on it"—i.e. frightened with thinking of it.

Without another word he took her hand, led her across the line, and helped her up the steep narrow steps of the engine. Then standing opposite to her for a moment on the foot-plate, and holding both her hands in his, while she could see in the glare of the engine-fire all his worship of her shining in his eyes, he said, "Ida, it is like you." Ida thought there was nothing she would not have done for such praise from him.

Archie then took the shovel, and initiated her into the mysteries of firing. He showed her how to handle the shovel, and explained that all she had to do was to fling the coal as far in as she could—as far towards the side as she could—and (since she could not put much in at a time) as often as she could. He would himself be able to relieve her now and then. As they ran tender first, Archie could watch the stately figure bent unwearied at its drudgery, till his heart overflowed with a strange mixture of pity and worship.

It did not take many minutes for them to reach the next block cabin, where was the other cross-over road by which he could get the engine back on to the up line.

Here Archie helped Ida down, and showed her how to hold the switch-lever till the engine had well passed her. It was a nervous business, as anyone who tries it for the first time will find, and Ida was all but unnerved as she stood alone holding the lever while the engine thundered past within a foot of her. It seemed for the moment as if it must run over her.

They were back to their train before it was ready for them, and Archie, leaving Ida on the engine, hurried to the signal-box to give again directly instructions he had already sent the signalman by the guard—namely, to telegraph to Woolstenholme to have all things ready to receive the dead and wounded, and to have every intervening train shunted till the ambulance-train had passed. These messages the signalman had sent ten minutes since, and had had acknowledged, and Archie was relieved to hear that the only three trains—all goods—between him and Woolstenholme on the up-line were already in the sidings of the stations at which they had been stopped by the news of the fouling of both lines. Being thus absolutely secure of a clear line he could help Ida with the firing and reach Woolstenholme in less than forty minutes, if the water held out—his only anxiety. For

the rest, having a good engine, a light train of five carriages and a van, and a clear road with but few and easy gradients, he was happy in thinking that at the cost, perhaps, of a slight increase in the shaking he could bring the sufferers within reach of all that could be done for them in the shortest possible time.

He hurried from the signal-cabin, to help the guard and such of the passengers as were unhurt to lift the dead and the injured into the carriages. But, this sad work having just been done, he rejoined Ida on the engine and drew very gently out, gradually sharpening the pace up to a mile a minute. A mile a minute on an engine seems double the pace of what it does in a first-class carriage. The rocking, jerking, bounding motion of the engine and the hurricane rush of the wind and roar of the train make the pace seem terrific.

It seemed so to Ida at those times when, Archie having taken the shovel from her hands, she stood alone on the look-out.

It was a strange and weird experience to her to thunder at that frightful rate along an unknown road and through so pitchy a darkness, that, if she had been walking in it, she must have groped her way. And then the heart-shaking sounds which followed each other swift and sudden as the notes on some stupendous organ, with the deep pedal boom of the train as a constant undertone—the savage roar of the tunnel softening suddenly in the open, followed then in quick succession by a crash over a bridge, a rattle through a cutting, and the thunder through a station that seemed to reel out of their path.

Sometimes the great engine seemed to her excited imagination alive and flying for life, panting and in torment, the steam, with the red glow of the furnace reflected from it, like a lolling tongue of flame; while then these sounds were as the roar of its pursuers, who rushed at it and tried to close it in, but it tore madly through them all with the fierce strength of despair.

"We shall do now," said Archie cheerfully, with a boyish exultation in the tremendous pace. "There's water enough in the boiler alone to take her in, and you needn't put on another ounce—Ida! Oh, my God!"

In a moment the steam was off, the brake on, the whistle opened, and the engine reversed, while Archie cried hoarsely to the girl transfixed before him:

"Hold fast!"

If she had not been with him he would have taken the slight and sole chance of life that seemed to remain—a leap from the engine. For there, as he rounded a curve, he saw but a few seconds off, the forelights of an engine that must, therefore, be facing them on the same metals. Most probably it also was in full steam, and then it would have been engine to engine, and speed to speed, but even if it were at a stand, there was not the least chance of pulling up in time to prevent a tremendous collision.

In such an intense moment thought is intense as a flash of lightning which, at night, shows vividly a whole country buried but a moment before in darkness. So, forgotten scenes and sins of Ida's past life sprang out of the darkness of distance with startling distinctness. But while she, with closed eyes, thought only of these and of God, Archie could think only of her. His eyes, too, were shut against the horror of his death, for they were fastened in remorse on the still white face turned from death towards him, her cheek pressed tight upon both hands as they clutched the side of the tender. Willingly he would have died for her, yet her death—this frightful death—was at his door.

Another moment and he had leaped forward, caught her in his arms, and kissed her twice in the delirium of relief.

"Safe!" he shouted as she opened her eyes on this happy celebration of a happy escape.

They had shot past the lights. They were the lamps of a goods train, of such length that it took up the whole loop-line into which it had been shunted, and that its engine, whose lights the driver had not removed, faced them within a foot or two of their metals.

"Oh, Archie!" was all Ida could say as she grasped his hands in both of hers.

He helped her to a seat, where she sat silent for a moment, holding still his hand, but having only God in all her thoughts.

"It's been a horrible shock to you. How I wish I hadn't taken you."

"I do not wish it, Archie."

As for those foolish kisses—they were foolish, that's all—no great cause of shame to Archie, or of offence to Ida. Perhaps, if the truth were known, they seemed to Archie to be cheap at the cost of all that agony, and they seemed to Ida to double the sweetness of her escape from death.

CHRONICLES OF ENGLISH COUNTIES.

SHROPSHIRE. PART I.

IF we enter Shropshire by old Watling Street; which is here a still-frequented highway, pursuing a track marked out by men's footsteps from a time that is lost in the mists of dim antiquity; we shall not have travelled far before we come in sight of the great hearthstone or altar of all the county round, the solitary and wild looking Wrekin. A bold and rocky primeval mountain, rising from the fertile plains to a height of thirteen hundred feet—the abode of storms and clouds, when the land beneath, perhaps, rejoices in calm and sunshine—the Wrekin has ever strongly appealed to the imagination of all the dwellers in the land around. To this day there is a sort of tribal solidarity about the men of Shropshire, and their favourite toast when they meet in foreign lands is to "All friends round the Wrekin." The Welshman from his mountain-tops catches sight of its bold outline rising above the shining distant plains, and may recall the days when men of his race pastured their flocks over those rich plains, and held their fort or their city of refuge on the summit of that solitary height. And yet our Welshman will be doubtful whether his ancestors gave that mount its name. For Wrekin is not distinctly Welsh, and that it is not Saxon we may decide from the fact that the name appears wrapped up in the Roman *Uriconium*, which seems to say, town by the Wrekin, or something equivalent.

From Wrekin's lofty brow, furrowed by the mounds and trenches of tribes which have vanished from the land, a noble prospect is to be seen of all the country round. To the south are the fires and furnaces of the iron and coal regions; and looking westwards, beyond the towers of Shrewsbury, rise the blue hills of Wales, the massive bulwarks of the Berwyns. Nay, by a strong and eagle-like eye even, perhaps the peak of old Snowdon may be seen crowning the distant ranges. But not of mountains or of rugged moors is the Wrekin most eloquent, but rather of the great fertile plains over which it presides, and which here stretch almost without a break from west to east, and from north to south. At your feet the broad and placid Severn flows down to Bristol and the western ocean, and at the foot of those distant hills the Dee winds its way towards Chester, while in the same expanse of

varied fertile plain the feeders of the Trent make their way, willow-shaded, towards the northern sea.

Here one would say is the site for some bountiful mother city of the plains, a place where the great highways should meet and divide, and where peasants should bring the produce of their fields from far and near; while from its walls one should hear the busy hum of men, the ringing of anvils, the merry clink of masons' trowels, the cries of market-people, and the pleasant hubbub of human existence. Even a little exercise of imagination will bring this all back to us, for there below us, at the point where the pleasant river Tern joins the more famous Severn, once lay the great city of Uriconium.

A considerable city would Uriconium now be deemed, even in these days of congested population, with its walls some four miles in compass—an extent equal to that of mediæval London—enclosing handsome buildings and wide streets:

High towers, fair temples, goodly theatres,
Strong walls, rich porches, princely palaces,
Large streets, brave houses, sacred sepulchres.

All is silent now and lonely; the eye may trace here and there a fragment of masonry laid bare by recent excavations. There on the site of the buried city stands the village of Wroxeter and its church, itself ancient with sepulchres of long-forgotten knights and worthies who lived and died centuries ago, and whose bones lie about the foundations of a city, of the very existence of which in their lives they were ignorant. How the great city fell recent writers have attempted to show. "With its storm by the West Saxons," writes Mr. Green, "the very existence of the city came to an end. Its ruins show that the place was plundered and burned, while the bones which lie scattered among them tell their tale of the flight and massacre of its inhabitants, of women and children hewn down in the streets, and of wretched fugitives stifled in the hypocausts whither they had fled with their little hoards for shelter. A British poet, in verses still left to us, sings piteously the death-song of Uriconium, the white town in the valley, the town of white stones gleaming among the green woodlands."

Whether the elegy of the British poet, Lwyarch Hen, whom the Welsh claim as one of their kings, refers to Uriconium as "the white town between Tren and Trodwyd" is a matter of fierce dispute

among rival antiquaries. But anyhow the wail over the ruined town seems wonderfully appropriate to the scene:

Its people, are they not gone?

And truly Uriconium seems to have been the very last of the Roman cities to survive in its ancient importance. The old geographers show it as the chief town of the Cornabii, whom the Welsh describe as an intruding tribe from the country of Pwyl, or the Low Countries, who settled here before the Roman invasion—a people like the Swiss, it may be imagined, good handicraftsmen, and yet good soldiers, skilled in the management of their barren upland farms, and yet crowding into the cities as artificers and traders. Now, from its position, Uriconium was evidently a commercial and manufacturing centre; it was not a great military station, and its walls, in their full compass, were evidently built to protect the city itself and the inhabitants within its circuit, and not as a military post. Terrible must have been the suffering involved in the destruction of this great city, but it is hardly possible that its inhabitants were completely annihilated. Even in the savage wars of Assyrians, Medes, and Persians, the artificers and skilled workmen seem to have been spared in the destruction of a city, and we may suppose that the fugitives from Uriconium spread themselves over the country round, and we may perhaps trace in the skilled workmen of Birmingham, of Wolverhampton, and of the adjacent towns, descendants of the lost tribes of Uriconium; the Coranians of the Welsh triads. One curious bit of evidence of the existence of this people and its origin is to be found in the name of two small rivers of the district—the Moes and the Mose recalling the Maas and the Meuse of the Rhine district.

For hundreds of years after its destruction the remains of Uriconium rose sadly over the plain as a monument of destruction and decay, and we catch a glimpse of the appearance they presented in a legend which has probably a foundation of fact. William the Conqueror, it is said, on a visit to the Welsh borders, saw a very large town all burnt and ruined within the remains of its high walls, the appearance of which aroused strong curiosity. A Welsh peasant being interrogated, told a long story, such as Hotspur would have described as skimble-skamble stuff, about the destruction of the city by some enchantment, in which the giant Geomagog took a part. Here was an

adventure ready for William's Norman chivalry. Accordingly, one Payn Peveril armed himself—perhaps it is our friend Peveril of the Peak, a natural son of the Conqueror—and with fifteen other knights took up his lodging in the highest palace, as a tacit challenge to the powers of darkness. At night a terrible storm came on, and the Norman knights, scattered here and there by the lightning, lay for dead about the place. Then the giant appeared, or rather the foul fiend in his person, but Peveril was ready for him, and a terrific combat ensued, like that between Christian and Apollyon in *Pilgrim's Progress*. But in the end, with the aid of the sign of the cross, Peveril triumphed, and the fiend was overcome. With a sword at his throat the prostrate giant was made to own himself vanquished, and then the Christian knight sank a little from his moral altitude by trying to extort the secret of the buried treasure.

But this last is a secret which it seems the good knight failed to obtain, nor has anyone as yet been successful in finding the clue to the buried wealth of Uriconium. With the advent of the Normans, however, and the beginning of an era of solid building in wrought stone, the ruins of Uriconium, like those of many other Roman towns, began to be of value as a quarry of ready-made building materials. A little way down the Severn rose the Abbey of Buildwas, whose ruins are still impressive with their background of the lonely Wrekin. Haughmond Abbey also was probably built from the ruins of Uriconium, and the abbey, the friaries, and the numerous churches of Shrewsbury no doubt were constructed of the same materials. Uriconium was carried off piecemeal, and levelled even with the ground. But that ground, luckily for posterity, was not the original level of the city streets, for in the five or six centuries that had elapsed since its destruction, soil had accumulated about the buildings to a depth of seven or eight feet. Nothing was visible of the old city a quarter of a century ago, except a mass of masonry twenty feet high, and some seventy-two feet long, that stood by the village smithy, and was known to the incurious villagers as the old wall. Tradition indeed had preserved some memory of the city, and treasure-seekers at various times drove pits into the ruins, and excavated here and there, as directed by the divining-rod, according to signs extorted by the incantations of the cunning wizard of

the district. A buried well was said to exist, containing unheard-of treasures.

Near the brook of Bell,
There is a well,
Which is richer than any man can tell.

The copper coins which appear to have been sown broadcast over the site were known to the peasantry as *dinders*, in which some see a reminiscence of the Roman denarius.

In 1859 regular excavations were begun, commencing with the old wall, which proved to be in the centre of the buried city, and probably the containing wall of the central basilica, or hall of justice, that stood fronting the market-place. The buildings dug out proved of a very solid and substantial structure, the walls of the houses were three feet thick, the streets wide and well paved. Pottery was found in plenty; a good deal of the well-known red Samian ware, with specimens of a kind evidently made in the neighbourhood, and probably of the fine white Brosely clay which is still celebrated for the making of tobacco-pipes. Oyster-shells, too, were found in large numbers, showing that the popularity of the delicious mollusk is of no recent origin. The medicine stamps of a physician, the moulds in which coins were made, painters' palettes, a surgeon's lancet, the workshop of a metal-worker and enameller, these are a few of the interesting finds of which the moveable objects have enriched the museum of the town of Shrewsbury. But only a small part of the city has been as yet excavated. As odd fifty-pound notes have come in from rich and enthusiastic archaeologists, a corresponding amount of digging and excavating has been done, but our British Troy, with all the romance, and poetry, and mystery of its existence but half understood, must wait patiently for the day of its complete revelation.

After the destruction of Uriconium, a neighbouring height above the river, almost enclosed by a loop, or as the Scotch would call it, a link of the Severn, seems to have become a centre of population. The Welsh called the place *Pengwern*, meaning the headland rising from the alder swamp, and sometimes *Amwithig*, or *Allpleasant*—awfully pleasant as we should call it now. And here, if we may put faith in *Lwyrarch Hen*, was the hall of *Kyndylan*, the chieftain who was slain in defending Uriconium from its assailants.

Kyndylan's hall is forlorn to-night,
On the top of Carree Hytwyth,
Without lord, without company, without feast.

And this is the site of the Shrewsbury of the present day, a pleasant, picturesque site on a wooded height, rising gradually from the bend of the river to the castle mound, which defends the neck of the isthmus. All about the watery meadows were scattered alders and willows, from which the Saxons gave the place the name of Scrob, or Shrubsbury, while an alternative name, derived from the willows that bordered the streams, would be Saulsbury, or Sallowbury, whence no doubt Salop, or Salopia, as another name of the county.

The fighting-men who killed Kyndylan, probably took possession of his hall—little better than a mud hut in itself, but once vocal with feasting, with stories, with songs, and the strains of the harp beyond anything that it is given us to enjoy in these dull days. But the town was not of much account in Saxon times, although we may get a dim vision of a visit from Harold on his way to put the Welsh in order. There is a doubtful tradition, indeed, that the great cairns on the ridge of the Steperstones, towards the Welsh border, were thrown up in honour of Harold's victories over the Welsh. But under the stern Norman rule the town soon became of importance from the castle which Roger de Montgomery built upon the site of the British fort. A strong, arrogant, cruel race were these Montgomeries, who soon came to a bad end in the person of Robert de Belesme, whose rebellion against Henry the First, the lion of justice, with his defence of Shrewsbury Castle against the king, has recently been dwelt upon by Mr. Freeman. Once more, ere long, Shrewsbury Castle stood out against a king, in the wars between the Empress Maud and the popular hero, King Stephen, and again was forced to surrender to the royal power. Were there any peaceful inhabitants of the little burgh, they must have been sorely perplexed and harassed by the incessant turmoil about them. If king and barons were quiet, then the Welsh would be stirring, and in 1215 we find Llewellyn, Prince of Wales, strong enough to defeat all the power of the Lords Marchers, and to lay siege to Shrewsbury itself, which was speedily surrendered to him. The Welsh prince, however, did not remain long in possession, and with the coming of stern Edward the First, the scourge alike of Welsh and Scotch, matters assumed quite a different aspect. Edward was determined to make an end of the Welsh difficulty, and encamped at Shrewsbury

bodily with bag and baggage. Court, exchequer, parliament, all the machinery of government, were hurried off to the Welsh borders to await the issue of Edward's war; a fine haul, indeed, for the Welsh could they have broken through the iron net that Edward was drawing around them. But the ruthless king was too strong for the mountaineers; and the long struggle between Teuton and Celt, which may be said to have lasted for more than eight centuries, was apparently brought to an end by the death of Llewellyn, the last of the native princes who could rightly style himself Prince of Wales.

The Parliament at Shrewsbury in King Edward's time is noticeable as being the first in which citizens of London are recorded as having served as members. Six notable citizens made the long and perilous journey to Shrewsbury to meet the king. The lower house was lodged in a barn attached to the monastery of SS. Peter and Paul, while the barons were quartered in the castle.

It was the lot of these citizens of London to be among the judges of Prince David, the brother of Llewellyn, whom the Parliament condemned to the cruel, barbarous execution of being dragged to death in the streets of Shrewsbury at the tail of a spirited horse. It was with a grim kind of satisfaction, no doubt, that the London citizens carried back among their baggage the ghastly head of the murdered prince to be placed over London Bridge. The king had done a cruel deed upon a brave adversary, but he had highly pleased the commercial interest by an act of vigour, and no doubt found his account in it, when next he had to go into the city for money.

However, the stern cruelty of the king had its effect in making the Welsh marshes a safer place of residence, and the next appearance of an English monarch at Shrewsbury was of Edward the Second in all his bravery, with his brilliant court and favourites, and an assemblage of barons and knights, for whose entertainment a splendid tournament was arranged; sports which ended tragically enough in the death of Roger Mortimer, Earl of March, the ancestor of the line of Yorkist kings.

In the reign of Richard the Second, the town was again the seat of a Parliament, adjourned to Shrewsbury from Westminster; a Parliament which was held in the chapter-house of the abbey with great splendour. Among the attendants of the young and light-hearted king was a Welsh

squire, an adopted son, as it were, of the English court, where he had received his education and his training in all knightly exercises. This was Owen Glendwr, and afterwards we find the young Welshman one of the faithful few among the faithless, who served his master to the last, and was taken prisoner with him in Flint Castle.

Upon the death of Richard, Owen retired to his own estate in Wales, to that pleasant Glyndyfrdwy from which he took his name—a sunny, solitary nook looking out upon the lovely Dee, as the river flows on its way to Llangollen. In little favour at court, Owen soon found the hand of an English noble stretched out to snatch away his small estate; and so, with all the spirit of a knight-errant, he furbished up his arms and his pedigree, and with a gathering of wild Welsh hillmen, set himself in arms against the mighty monarchy of England. King Henry himself took the field against this seemingly insignificant opponent, and quartered himself once more at Shrewsbury. But Henry was no great warrior, and his expeditions against Owen all ended in failure and disaster.

The keen intelligence of the Percys had noted the king's weakness, the feeble hold he had upon the people, and the elements of disorder in the realm, and presently began the great rebellion of Hotspur, the story of which is so well told by Shakespeare. The commencement of the revolt found the king almost unprepared, while the Percys had already a large following under arms and were marching southwards. But Henry, rising to the desperate nature of the situation, dashed forward almost alone, leaving his sons, Prince Harry and Prince John—him of Gaunt—with the Earl of Westmoreland, to put the counties under array and join him with their force at Bridgnorth. Henry was fortunate enough to overtake and detain at Burton-on-Trent a body of men who had been raised for the warfare on the Scots' border, and hearing that his enemy had reached Stafford, and had turned aside to join his forces with Owen Glendwr, the king threw himself upon Shrewsbury with the energy of desperation.

This rapid march upon Shrewsbury in effect saved Henry his crown. For Owen had succeeded in mustering a good force of fighting Welshmen at Oswestry, to join the Percys, but hearing that the king had already occupied Shrewsbury, he began to doubt the issue, and so suspended his

march. And then all over the south and west of England the king's name had proved its power, and a strong force of stout yeomen and men-at-arms was marching northward with the princes.

Both sides were soon ready for action, and on the 22nd July, 1403, the king, as soon as dawn lighted up the sky, marched out his forces into the open fields to the north of the town. Already Hotspur was in the saddle with Douglas, his late enemy and present ally, and uncle Worcester, whose age and experience might balance the impetuosity of the daring young warriors.

We are told that the peas were then ripe, and their haulms turning yellow, but they grew so thickly and abundantly on the fields that Hotspur took advantage of their cover to harass the king's advance with his best archers. But the cumbrous hosts were presently drawn out in a long line extending from Berwick westward to Haughmond Abbey in the east. Hotspur had slept at Berwick that night, such sleep as he had taken in the short summer's night, and had been strangely cast down when he learnt the name of the place. For some wizard had prophesied that he should not live long after he had seen Berwick, and he had avoided the familiar northern town ever since; but now fate was awaiting him on this unknown ground. "Yet will I not be cheaply won," muttered Hotspur.

And so in the bright summer morning, the sunlight stealing across between the hostile lines, suddenly the trumpets sounded with portentous blare; while at the signal a great shout arose from thousands of throats: "St. George, St. George!" cried the king's men, while the Northumbrians replied as stoutly, "Esperance! Percy!" And then the cries were stilled for a moment as from either side a tremendous shower of arrows hurtled through the air, casting a dim shadow over the hosts. Then many a steel coat was riven; and many a stout fellow bit the dust as the opposing lines struggled together, and, with a noise like the beating of a thousand anvils, sword, and spear, and axe tested every joint and rivet of casque and cuirass. And thus for hours and hours the fight wavered to and fro, with various success, but tending on the whole to Hotspur's advantage.

The lion-hearted Hotspur saw the critical moment of the day, and calling to him Douglas and the bravest of his knights, they all made a desperate drive at the

king's standard. The standard was reached, Douglas clove the skull of the king's standard-bearer; the king was carried away in the rush. All seemed lost for him, and the star of the Percys triumphant; already horsemen had ridden off to bear the glad tidings to the north, when an arrow from some unknown hand pierced the heart of Hotspur, and he fell at the moment of victory.

The death of Hotspur paralysed every arm on the Northumbrian side. What was there to fight for now that the great chief had fallen? Confusion followed, and dismay, and the rebels—we may so call them now—began to fly. Douglas rode off at full speed for the north, but was overtaken and made prisoner, and soon after uncle Worcester was captured. The knights and gentlemen of Cheshire who had taken arms from a feeling of personal loyalty to Richard, and personal dislike to his supplanter, were cut off in their flight, and almost annihilated. But the loss of the northern forces was chiefly sustained in the flight. Up to the moment of defeat the king's army had suffered far more severely; all its chief leaders had been slain. Thus all the churches round about were long rich with the sculptured effigies of those who had fallen beneath the trenchant blades of the Percys and the Douglasses.

Henry returned thanks for his victory on the battle-field, and decreed the erection of a collegiate church in honour of his victory. This church, or part of it, still exists as the parish church of Albrighton, and on its site, tradition says, the monarch pitched his tent on the night after the battle.

All this time Glendwr's army had remained encamped at Oswestry; but Owen himself, it is said, watched the fight from the convenient shelter of a lofty oak. And when Glendwr saw the result of the day, he rode silently back, and his forces dissolved like a mist.

In after days, when the wars of the Roses began, Shrewsbury definitely assumed the badge of the White Rose. After the fatal battle of Wakefield, when the Duke of York was captured and beheaded, his son Edward made for Shrewsbury, where he raised men enough among the hardy borderers to fight and win, soon after, the battle of Mortimer's Cross. During the later scenes of the war, Edward's queen resided there permanently for safety, and in the convent of the Black Friars were born two of her children, one destined to

die in infancy, while the other, Richard, came to a tragic mysterious end, for it seems still doubtful whether he was murdered with his brother in the Tower, or survived, to die, as Perkin Warbeck, by the hands of the executioner.

With the accession of Richard the Third, Shrewsbury again figures in the national annals. When the Duke of Buckingham deserted Richard's party, he took refuge in Wales, and raised an army there with which he had planned to seize upon Gloucester, and begin a campaign in the west. But a violent storm of rain raised a flood in the Severn, which cut the duke off from Gloucester, and at the same time dissolved his army. The duke took refuge in Shropshire, where he had estates, and concealed himself in the house of his steward Banister. The steward, however, betrayed his master to the King's sheriff, who took the duke forthwith to Shrewsbury, where he awaited the King's pleasure—so forcibly conveyed by the Shakespearean adapter:

"Off with his head: so much for Buckingham."

DEAN WHARTON'S DAUGHTER.

A STORY IN SEVEN CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I. AN OLD TUNE.

To commence with an assertion. It is an undoubted fact that cathedral towns, like the fat boy in Pickwick, can seldom or never be said to be fairly awake. Furthermore, should some rare event or shock galvanise by chance their centres into some faint presentment of life or wakefulness, their relapse is, as with that immortal youth, sure, sudden, and complete.

If you chance to know Postleton at all, you know how very far that solemn city is from being any exception to the rule. It is indeed at the moment I take up its peaceful records illustrating it to the full. An event has occurred, the shock has been given, and the city is even now hastening—if anything so slow can be said to hasten—into a respectable and dignified relapse.

Besides its cathedral, a grandly solemn structure of which the city is justly proud, Postleton boasts, just cresting the hill, and some quarter of a mile beyond its prim but pretty outskirts, a goodly block of grey stone buildings, known to all men as the barracks. Here a regiment of cavalry finds its quarters, to the advantage, no doubt (though over this heads are shaken), social and otherwise of the neighbourhood.

The event from which the city is at present recovering, or rather relapsing, is no less a one than a change of regiments, with all the bustle and excitement indispensable to that proceeding. The old regiment but yesterday played itself dashingly out to the appropriate strains of *The Girl I Left Behind Me*; to-day the new one—doubtless to equally appropriate strains—has played itself as dashingly in.

Farewell sighs and wistful glances have followed the one; and—such is life!—bright faces and welcoming smiles have greeted the other; and thus with a possible ultra-faithful heart (feminine) here and there, things are, so to speak, squared in Postleton, and affairs once more roll placidly on.

CHAPTER II. A NAME.

It was the evening of the day on which Postleton had welcomed the new comers. Rain was falling, streets were emptied, silence and respectability, wet through, and in a forlorn state of dampness and limpness, had the place to themselves. Gas flared wastefully in shops where for the last hour never a customer had entered; where shutters were at last being put up over windows into which nobody looked. Eight o'clock had struck from tower and steeple. A church-bell was going ding-dong; from the barracks on the hill, where the stranger red-coats had settled down, the familiar tattoo came faintly sounding. In the cathedral-yard the grey minster towers loomed in misty silence. In the long, soft evenings of summer the Close was a tempting spot enough to those for whom rest and silence did not necessarily mean dulness and despair. Through all the long procession of years on which the old grey pile had looked so calmly down, how many a one had loved the quiet spot, how many a hot and restless heart had sought rest and peace within its shadows—quiet nooks and corners where glare of sun and turmoil of the world never seemed to penetrate, and where only the chirp of birds and the cool rustle of the trees came, mingled, it might be, with the tones of the great organ to break the stillness! There was stillness enough to-night, no sound even of passing footsteps in the place, only the dreary drip, drip, of the fast-falling rain. Through the mist, here and there, stray lights blinked from the old red-gabled, ivy-covered houses where the cathedral dignitaries found shelter. At the corner, the one spot of real brightness, the deanery looked cheerily out through its

red-curtained windows, for Mr. Dean was entertaining a party, principally composed of clergymen and old fogies, at dinner. The Dean was a tall, thin man, with white, scanty locks and a great droop in his shoulders, gained, it was said, by much stooping over his beloved cello.

The Very Rev. Arthur Wharton, D.D., had been a widower for more than ten years past, and was known for many a mile beyond the Precincts for his kindly heart, strange, shy ways, and his devotion to his children and his violoncello. It was his daughter Agatha, his first-born and veritable right hand, who, such a mere child when the poor mother died, had ever since, with strangely old-fashioned ways just at first, done the housekeeping and "looked after papa." And she it was—alas, that possible faithful heart!—who had looked with wistful eyes (though, truth to tell, it was but in thought she had trusted herself to follow them) after the departing heroes of the day before. Poor Agatha! It was but an old story, but her experience of the world was not very great, or she might have taken comfort to herself in the knowledge that men love and ride away every day, and if women's hearts are broken now and then, women's hearts should not be won so easily. "Had her love been so easily—too easily won?" Agatha had asked herself the question, how many times already! She could not say, she could not tell. Just now she only knew that she had let her heart go from her, and she could not call it back. It had been won from her by what falseness, what treachery! and now it was cast back to her, and she could not take it up. How the red flamed into her cheeks as she remembered it all! How she railed against herself for the past! What impossible vows she made for the future! Poor Agatha! Her experience of life, as I have said, was not very great, and as she sat, sick and ashamed, hiding her aching heart as best she might in the deanery schoolroom this evening, she kept asking herself if anyone before her had ever been so foolish, so unhappy. In the cosy, old-fashioned room quiet was supposed to reign, and lessons for the morrow to be in progress. But it was a supposition merely. The other occupants of the room were but three, but one of them alone contrived to make noise enough for double the number. In vain Agatha cried:

"Hush! they will hear you in the dining-room."

"And a good thing too—wake 'em up, sleepy old Rip Van Winkles," shouted the culprit, Jack, aged fourteen, and a grammar-school boy.

"Oh, Arthur, do make him be quiet," implored Agatha.

"Quiet, you sir!" cried Arthur, thus appealed to, looking up from his study of the new Army List.

"Oh, I say," cried the irrepressible Jack, as his eyes fell on the little pink cover "let's see who these new fellows are. I saw you, Miss Frank, hiding over in old Townsend's shop this morning, when they came in, and yesterday too, for the matter of that, when the others went out."

"I was with Miss Thorne," Frank began.

"Oh yes, I know—all right; but where was Agatha? Too proud to go, I suppose?"

Frances, otherwise Frank, Jack's twin and boon companion, shook her frizzy head.

"Agatha does not care about military men—not as a rule; do you, Agatha? I do, though Mrs. Tyerman does not think they are satisfactory acquaintances."

The boys laughed outright, and even Agatha smiled.

"Most of the others were nice enough," said Arthur. "I don't see why some of these shouldn't be."

"Oh, I dare say they are all very nice," said Frank pleasantly, making a place for herself on Jack's chair, "if only Agatha had not made up her mind not to know anything about them. Now, then, Arthur, Two Hundred and Tenth Red Royals."

"Frank's in love with the whole lot, I do believe," cried Jack. "I didn't think much of 'em myself."

"How disappointed they'd be if they knew!" said Frank.

"Well, I shall hear their names first, and fall in love with them afterwards. People with ugly names are always so stupid. Go on, Arthur."

"I can't very well go on until you let me begin."

"Well, begin then."

"Two Hundred and Tenth Red Royals—Lieut.-Col. Patrick Joseph Porter, V.C."

"And a nice little party he is," interrupted Jack. "They haven't got his weight, have they? Not room for it, perhaps?"

"Now, Jack, do be quiet; never mind him, Arthur."

"Majors Walter R. Leslie, James Browne."

Frank gave a movement of disapproval.

"Oh, James Browne won't do."

"Why not, Miss Clever?" cried Jack. "Now, I dare say he's the best fellow of the lot."

"Oh, there are plenty of good Brownes about," said Arthur. "But what's in a name?"

"Ever so much, I think," chattered Frank. "Look at old Canon Crump; no wonder he has never got anyone to take him, poor dear! Fancy being Mrs. Crump! Yours sincerely, Frances Crump;" and pretty Frances Wharton laughed, the others perforce joining in, till the echo of their young voices must have almost reached the poor old Canon himself, smiling in happy innocence over the Dean's old port downstairs.

"As for fine names, if that is what you want," said Jack scornfully, "just look at that Dr. Lacey fellow—a nice snob he was; gave himself airs enough for the whole regiment, and was less than nobody, after all."

"By the way," put in Arthur, "I never thought much of your favourite, Danby, Agatha."

"My favourite, Arthur!" protested poor Agatha faintly.

"Well, he was always at your elbow when he got the chance; not that he got it here so very often, though I have wondered at the governor having him even as much as he did."

"Asked himself, I expect," growled Jack parenthetically.

"It was because he was musical, I think, papa sometimes asked him," said Agatha, with a desperate feeling that if ever "the boys" only came to suspecting her secret, she must run away and hide herself for ever.

"He musical!" shouted Jack; "the humbug! why, he couldn't so much as turn over your music for you, Agatha, without someone to poke him up at the bottom of the page."

"Well, he will have to turn over someone else's music now," put in Frank cheerfully.

"I think it is bed-time," Agatha said presently; there was a little tremor in her voice, which no one noticed.

"Oh, but Arthur has not read half the names; just another quarter of an hour," Frank pleaded.

"It is long past your time, Frank," said Agatha. "I am going too, for my head is aching."

And so, Frank protesting no more, good-nights were said. But there was no sleep

for Agatha that night—there had been but little for many a night past.

The great bell in the cathedral tower close by boomed out stroke by stroke the heavy hours. From near and far the numerous church clocks one by one took up the tale, and clanged or chimed them forth; still the weary head tossed on its pillow, and the hot tears fell like scorching rain. Happiness, forgetfulness, even, it seemed to Agatha, could be hers never again. But youth and pride are stronger than she knew; forgetfulness nearer than she thought; and love—well, it is Agatha Wharton's love-story that I am about to tell.

CHAPTER III. THE DEAN'S JAMES.

FOUR o'clock had sounded from the cathedral; the bell had ceased to call for service. Mrs. Thorne, Frances Wharton's daily governess, had passed from the deanery and disappeared with the other dozen or so of worshippers in the old Norman doorway opposite. Upstairs in the deanery schoolroom sat Frank, herself hard at work on a harmony lesson, for little Mr. Philp, the cathedral organist and Postleton music-master. She had not sat there long when the schoolroom door was thrown open with a bang, and Jack's boyish voice proclaimed the intruder. Jack's face was very excited.

"Frank!" he cried; "Frank, just leave off and listen to me."

"I can hear you, Jack—I really can, so can the old jackdaws in the tower there, I should say, if they haven't cotton-wool in their ears."

"Cawk!" cried Jack, close to poor Frank's pretty pink ones, and away went Frank's book to the other end of the room. "Now, who is the old moustache the governor has got in the library? 'No admittance except on business,' you know; but there the interesting stranger sits with his hands in his trousers-pockets, calm as a cherub on a tombstone. Agatha's there too; as for the dear old Dean, he actually looks as if he wasn't wishing the fellow the other side of Jordan."

"If you have quite done, perhaps you will kindly bring me back my book," said Frank quietly.

"Now, Frank, don't be aggravating. Do you or don't you know who the party is?"

"Of course I do! The 'party,' as you call him, you very vulgar little boy, is James Browne—my Browne."

"Your Browne?"

"Oh, Jack, what a stupid you are!

Major James Browne, Red Royals, of course."

"Don't see how that makes him yours," said Jack.

"I should hope not, indeed!" retorted Frank. "Didn't I say at the very first I couldn't put up with any such name? James Browne! I can just see J. B., short, stout, hair a cheerful red, face, ditto."

Jack could stand no more, he broke into a derisive shout.

"If you could only see him! Short and stout is he? and red? Oh, Frank, you duffer!"

"Thank you!" interrupted Frank with much dignity.

"Don't mention it," returned Jack politely. "All I can say is, if that is your major he's taller than the governor, and just as thin; as for his hair it's all but black; moustaches likewise; to conclude, his face is a pleasing bronze, and he's got eyes like gimlets. He knew all about the book I wasn't looking for, bless you! Oh, Frank, you are a muff!"

"Never mind," said Frank, "there are Brownes just like that, I know. I wish Agatha would come up and tell us all about it. But don't talk any more, please; I have my lessons to do."

"So have I," said Jack, "worse luck," and was silent for two minutes.

Downstairs in the library James Browne still sat. Five came booming from the cathedral. The quarter sounded, then the half-hour, and at the same moment the library bell rang.

"At last," cried Jack and Frank together. Jack was out of the schoolroom, with all but his heels over the banisters, by the time Ruffles the butler had got to the library door. Jack went back to Frank too astounded for speech.

"Well?" cried Frank. "Well?"

"He's going to stop!"

"What! Who?"

"James Browne." Then Frank and Jack sat and looked at one another.

The Dean of Postleton, whatever he might be to outsiders, was no enigma to his children. No father was better loved or more loving, but his odd, shy ways, his misery and discomfort in the presence of strangers, were fully known to them. His old friends—and he had many—were welcome enough, but to the making of new ones he was not given—certainly not in this sudden and altogether unlooked-for manner. And here was this mysterious major, who had barely been in Postleton a week, and who had

never crossed his threshold until an hour ago, made free of the house at once! However, there was nothing to be done but to sit and wait with what amount of patience they might until Agatha should be available. This was not until the first gong sounded, when the library door was heard to open, and Agatha's soft footsteps came up the stairs. At the schoolroom door Jack and Frances pounced out upon her.

"What does it mean?" they cried, and dragged her into the room.

Agatha looked at them with an amused smile. A faint rose bloomed on her cheek, her soft brown eyes were shining. Frank's sharp ones noticed it all.

"Why, Agatha, your headache is gone. Is it the wonderful major who has done that—has he bewitched you and papa both?"

"I think it is you who are bewitched," laughed Agatha. "As for Major Browne, he is nothing more wonderful than the son of papa's very oldest friend—the Browne we have heard him so often talk about."

"Oh, that is it?" said Jack; "then I hope he is one of the right sort, for I suppose we shall see plenty of him."

"But, Agatha, you didn't care about knowing any of them, don't you remember?" and Frank looked up at her sister in honest perplexity.

"But this is different. Papa seems as if he had known him all his life, indeed he has seen him before, though it is years ago. Besides, he is not a young man, or—anything of that sort," Agatha added a little vaguely. "It will be only as if we had suddenly found a new relation. Papa is calling him James already."

"Uncle James! Yes, that will do very nicely," said Frank. "He can take us skating and all that sort of thing when Arthur is gone to that horrid Woolwich."

"You just tell him so, Miss Frank. If he doesn't think you a cool young person, I'm a Dutchman."

"He will think me a most charming niece. Come, Agatha, let us go and put on our best frocks for 'our uncle.'"

It was the good Dean's fancy to have his four children round him at his late dinner. Without some such arrangement he would have seen little or nothing of the two younger. It would have been worse than useless quoting "custom" to the Dean in such a case, so when the Major, descending from the Dean's dressing-room, entered the drawing-room, he found his host and children already there.

Frank looked up and saw a tall, soldierly, dark-faced, dark-moustached man, "quite middle-aged," as she afterwards declared to Jack, "and every inch an uncle." The major saw the Dean, his kindly face looking more kindly still, as he stood before the fire—for, though August still, the day had been cold and cheerless—one hand in Agatha's, the other laid on Jack's young shoulder. And the Dean's eldest daughter, he saw her now, as it were, for the first time. In the dim light of the low-ceilinged, dusky library he could scarcely have been said to see her at all. But he saw her now, tall, fair, white-robed, lamp and firelight full upon her, a little queenly looking, a little stately; dark, smooth, rippling hair, a broad, smooth brow, a calm, rather sad, sweet face. The glow from the fire lent a flush to the soft, creamy complexion, and lighted up the soft, dark eyes that were raised to greet his entrance. James Browne was not quite the sober, middle-aged individual the Dean's children deemed him. At five-and-thirty a man has scarcely outlived all the fire and passion of youth, and, even as this man looked, his heart was stirred, his pulses throbbed. The old-fashioned, fire-lit room, the Dean, the little group surrounding him, faded. Time had rolled back; once more goddesses walked the earth—one was smiling on him now. But it was only for a moment. To whatever wild flights the outwardly calm Major's fancy might have wandered, he was speedily recalled by his host's voice.

"Come," the Dean was saying, "come to the fire and let me introduce the rest of my youngsters. This is Arthur, an embryo brother in arms, and this is Jack. I really don't know what we shall do with Jack. Never make a Dean of him, I fear—eh, Jack?"

"Make a lawyer of him, papa. He can talk, can Jack," said Frank, with a friendly nod to their visitor.

"Poor Frank!" said the Dean. "Look at her, James; doesn't she look like a young lady who can never get in a word edgeways?"

"My name is Frances, if papa would only remember," said the Dean's youngest daughter.

"And I am to try to remember too—eh, Miss Frances?"

"Of course; why, you could not call me Frank, you know. You are neither papa nor Jack."

"Certainly not."

"Imagine you calling Agatha Aggy."

James Browne gave a genuine shudder.

"I can imagine nothing so horrible."

"We used, you know, years ago; but she didn't like it, so we gave it up. I don't think she looks a bit like an Aggy, do you?" Frank went on confidentially, glancing over at Agatha, who with the Dean had gone over to a side table, and was at that moment turning over some music that lay upon it.

"Heaven forbid!"

At the exclamation Agatha turned.

"What is it?" she asked, coming forward.

"Oh," cried Frank, "I was only telling Major Browne that he had better not call you Aggy, because you didn't like it."

"Oh, Frank," cried Agatha, with a little flush and laugh.

"I don't think there was much fear," the Major said—he was laughing too. "How could they do it?"

At this moment, happily, the door was opened, and Ruffles announced that dinner was served. As James Browne felt the Dean's daughter's hand within his arm, as he looked down upon the face so near his own, he told himself if he only might come to call her Agatha he should be quite contented.

TRAVELS IN THE EAST.

PART II.

A CARAVAN is not uncommon in the East, and when a traveller falls in with one, he generally visits it. I should have as little dreamed of finding a cream ice in the desert as a caravan in Stepney; but somehow I fell in with one, and found it well worth visiting. As it was hidden in a sort of oasis as it were, a traveller might easily have passed, and not caught sight of it. But the sharp eyes of my guide were not to be deceived, and a single glance enabled him to indicate its whereabouts.

The oasis wherein the caravan had halted was not far from the spot I have described in my last paper.* Although by way of euphemy I call it an oasis, it bore no trace of verdure or refreshing vegetation; and in fact it differed little in its dark and dismal ugliness from the dull and dreary district that surrounded it. Perhaps it might appear that I was using a misnomer if I were to speak of this same region as a

desert, for in the space of three miles square there live above a million people. I simply speak of an oasis, because I am describing my late travels in the East, and I may as well endeavour to impart some Oriental flavour to my narrative. In the directory, however, my oasis is more prosily put down as "King's Arms Yard," abutting upon Carr Street. After quitting Regent's Place, it seemed a fit advancement to be brought to King's Arms Yard, and as far as the name went, one could hardly think it strange to find a caravan in Carr Street. This thoroughfare, however, like certain lordly folk, is honoured with a second title; which, although distinguishing, has not yet been inserted in the postal directory. The dwellers in the neighbourhood have styled it "Donkey Row," possibly because of the preponderance of costermongers, who mostly keep their carriages, among its influential residents.

After a glance at this last paragraph, the intelligent reader will have readily surmised that the caravan I saw was a yellow, old, roofed vehicle, which had probably belonged to a showman or a gipsy. Doubtless it had journeyed many a mile in shady lanes, and over sunny heaths, and breezy open commons; and had halted in the shelter of many a leafy wood, ere it came to its last resting-place in this great wilderness of brick. But its wanderings were over now. Its rural haunts and hiding-places would see its yellow face no more. Its wheels had been removed—and sold by the last occupant—it had come down in the world, and had sunk helpless on the ground, and having ceased to be a vehicle, was now hired as a house, at a shilling a week rental, by a reputable tenant.

This house, or caravanserai as Orientalists might call it, not being very capacious, could only hold one room, and this room, though not very large, yet served as cellar, kitchen, scullery, dining-room, and drawing-room, workshop, library, and bedroom for a couple of old people. Opposite the doorway, which was half closed by a hatch, there was a bed at the far end, which filled the space from side to side—if the word "far" may be used to denote so small a distance. Between the doorway and the bed—in the dining-room, that is—there were a work-table, or rather a work-bench, and a chair, and in the corner to the left there stood a little iron stove, with a smoke-pipe through the roof, which barely served to let the smoke out. A small old man stood by the table tying up in little

* ALL THE YEAR ROUND, New Series, Vol. 33, p. 349, "Travels in the East."

bundles the firewood he had cut. The house being such a tiny one, its contents were small to match, and the bundles were so little that they seemed to be intended for especially small fires. It might easily be guessed, too, that the little old man was making them for a woefully small price.

Above the bed, that is about three feet from the floor, there was a narrow little shelf, which held a little crockery and some few little odds and ends, which seemed somehow to impart the notion to my mind that a petticoat was somewhat familiar to the place. Among them was a little bottle, holding a little water and a little sprig of fir; which, being carefully preserved, had possibly been gathered from a last year's Christmas-tree. Beside it stood a little flower-pot with a couple of green hyacinths, green, but giving show of coming richly-coloured bloom. These latter were the gift of some Good lady Samaritan who had visited the little house, and thought a little floral decoration would improve it as a dwelling. "She gives me a little treat like," remarked the old man gratefully; "an' it makes a man feel cheerful to see a bit o' green about him while he's working."

It seemed well that there was something pleasant in the place, for the look outside was certainly not cheering. The yard lay inches deep in dirt, so that the notice appeared needless that there was no thoroughfare. All around him looked indeed in a slovenly condition, albeit the old man declared he got on "pretty tidily." He would confess, however, that his dwelling was a trifle draughty in cold weather. Draughty certainly it must have been, not to say even tempestuous, when the stormy winds did blow; and not very warm either when Jack Frost was at the door, and there was only half an inch or so of deal to stop his entrance. The caravan required caulking as badly as an old boat. There were great cracks between the boards, which seemed to make the walls transparent, and certainly the inmates could not truthfully complain of any want of ventilation.

Half sheltered by a shed, just in front of his own doorway, a couple of sons of the old man were, like him, busy cutting firewood. With a gusty drizzle falling, and the ground so deep in slush, the yard appeared a dampish place for such an occupation. When questioned as to income, the old man showed no reticence. He frankly stated that he made four hundred or so bundles in a week, and sold them,

being small, at eighteenpence the hundred. But he had to go about with a barrow for the sale of them, and the hiring of that vehicle reduced the weekly profits. Still, he and his old lady somehow managed to live on, and they were both of the same age, which might seem a little singular, and, being matched in years, they might last it out together. Seventy-six they were, and that was the real truth, as surely and as certainly as that his name was Jonas. And he was born in Willow Gardens, nigh to Curtain Road. Ah, 'twere a'most in the country then. Well, yes, now you came to think of it, the name did sound a pretty one, and seemed a little rural like. Yes, they got on fairish well, except of a hard winter. But times were fairish bad, too, seeing as they really hadn't bought a pound of butchers'-meat this two years. "Indeed," added the old man, "I do believe we'd a'most forgotten how it tasted like, till we got that Christmas-dinner as you gave us, Mr. Austin."

The old wood-cutter put forth his right hand as he said this, and gave my guide a hearty grip of gratitude, which showed how well the Christmas-meal still lingered in his memory. While taking leave of him I saw that there was pasted by the doorway a legal-looking document, which proved to be a notice of distress for rent. It was dated the 3rd of August in last year, and was addressed in clerkly hand to Mr. William Glibbery—not a bad name for a runaway who does not stop to pay his rent. This gentleman was informed that, as the sum of three pounds sterling was then due on his account to his landlord therein named, certain chattels had been seized, as specified thereunder, and which in the inventory were briefly thus described: "Four old Chairs, Mixed bed, and Shaving-glass."

What may be a "mixed" bed, the reader must be left to guess. I have no suggestion to help him in the matter, save that when a clown puts on his nightcap in a pantomime, the bed is pretty sure to get "a little mixed." And indeed the notion of the Law, in all its solemn majesty, being set to work to sell up all the goods of Mr. Glibbery, might well appear suggestive of a first-rate comic scene.

A thought of something humorous is worth having in the East, where the traveller will find his spirits easily depressed. So the tableau of the Sheriff entering to slow music (to indicate the tardy progress of the Law), and seizing the

four old chairs, and the mixed bed and the shaving-glass, formed a pleasant subject for a mental picture, to occupy our fancy as we went upon our way. The next halt that we came to was made in certain (so-called) Gardens, which had nothing horticultural about them, save their name. No hyacinths grew here, nor any sprig of green, and the only thing approaching to a fir-tree was a clothes'-prop. The gardens formed a no-thoroughfare, with a blank wall at the end, and beyond was a canal, and on all sides the horizon, which was not very distant, was monotonous with chimney-pots. Here we had a smiling welcome from a comely little woman, whose cheerful voice and manner formed a pleasant contrast to the dreariness around her. As we entered, she was busy giving dinner to her baby, who appeared to relish highly the plentiful maternal nourishment. Three cleanly little girls were clustered by the fire, with a cat by way of plaything somewhere in their midst. Two larger girls were absent—at school, their mother said, and she likewise owned a boy, who, like his father, was at work. There were some ugly china "ornaments" paraded on the chimney-piece, and, in the way of higher art, there was displayed a coloured photograph of General Garibaldi, to be recognised quite readily by his prominent red shirt. On the shelves to right and left of him there was a goodly show of crockery, which she said she had bought cheap, for it was given with the tea; and, to complete the household luxuries, there were a leash of clocks. These, however, were "all cripples," said the cheery little woman; but her husband had a weakness for seeing clocks about him, though they weren't of any use.

Four shillings a week was the rent paid for their house—for this room of ten square feet, say, and for the bedroom over it. This latter we were shown by the little dame in person, still carrying her baby, who was still at his repast. The stairs were steep but clean, and the chamber, though not large, looked quite palatial in appointment, as compared with all the other sleeping-places we had seen. There was actually a carpet in it, not a very large one, it is true, but still a carpet; and there was another clock, and this was really going; and there was a little table—let us say a toilette-table, for a clothes-brush lay upon it; and there was a bed with sheets and counterpane—yes, real sheets and counterpane; and by the window, curtained off,

was a small bed for the son, and a bed, a trifle bigger, was there for the five little daughters by the door.

Everything seemed clean and neat, above stairs and below. The house looked poor, no doubt, but still there was some comfort in it. "Ah," exclaimed the little mistress as baby ended his repast, "ah, it weren't always like this, now was it, Mr. Austin? Difference? Why yes, it's made a difference in all ways, both to him and me too. There, he'll work from morn to midnight now he will, and never grumble not one bit he won't. And he gives me all he gets too, an' I can feed the children well now, an' keep 'em clothed, an' tidy like. And I never could do that, you know, an' we was mostly all'ys glumpy afore he took the pledge."

I found, by further questioning the cheery little woman, that her husband was a sort of clever Jack-of-all-trades, who "did up houses" here and there and anywhere, she said, and was able by so doing, working late and early, to earn a pound or so a week. He seemed well-nigh a Croesus, when compared with all the wretchedly-paid workers I had heard of, and had seen too, in the East. But perhaps his calling needed more than common brain-work; more, for instance, than a costermonger's, which chiefly needs good lungs.

By way of a sad contrast to this cheerful little soul and her children, who, with baby, might have warbled, "We are Seven," we found a family next door who were terribly afflicted by the badness of the times, which has long been an epidemic ailment in the East. The mother we had met just as we left the caravan. She was trying to earn a sixpence by the selling of her "creeses," and was tying them in farthing bundles as she briskly trudged along. "Hard at work? Well, yes, sir," as we exchanged a greeting. "One had need to work hard nowadays, if one don't want to starve." She seemed a bustling, active, clean-cheeked, civil-speaking body, who tried to make the best of things, and had seen better days. Her shoes were in holes, and she was very poorly clad, and there was a worn and anxious look upon her face. That this was not without a cause became pretty clear to me, when I had seen her home and the children she was toiling for, out there in the wet street.

Their father was at work too; making

fish-baskets he was, and when in luck's way he could do a tidy trade. Make a couple of gross a day he could, and more too if he stuck to it and didn't stop a minute 'cept for swallowing of his meals. Profit? Well, he reckoned he could make four bob a day a'most, but then you had to go and sell 'em fust, and that was mostly a day's work. But the worst of it was as you couldn't get the stuff, now the sugar-trade were slack, leastways down there in the East.

The obvious connection between fish-baskets and sugar not being apparent to my uncommercial mind, it was explained that the baskets were made of the rush wrappers wherein the raw sugar was sent to be refined. Since this business had been sorely crippled by the foreign bounties, the basket-maker suffered no less than the sugar-baker from the want of work. My voluble informant had but one eye, and he kept this keenly fixed on me while he imparted his instruction; as a schoolman sharply notices the dullness of a dunce. Having done his best to enlighten my crass ignorance, he left his basket-making (which was done al fresco, in a drizzle and a draught), and showed the way indoors. A wretched room it was, this sitting-room or kitchen—call it which one pleased, the name would scarce be fit. For there was not a scrap of fire, nor any sign of cookery past, present, or to come; and, for purposes of sitting, there were but two old chairs, one with a broken leg. Floor and ceiling were in holes, and the plaster in great patches had crumbled from the walls. A pale-cheeked little boy, with the thinnest threadbare clothing to cover his thin limbs, was nursing a sick child, wrapped up in an old petticoat; while another boy, still smaller and still more thinly clad, was—playing, shall I say?—with a remarkably lean cat. A bit or two of crockery lay huddled in a corner, and the only ornament displayed was an old discarded horse-shoe, which, the man said, with grim irony, was hanging there “for luck.”

Upstairs we found two beds, one with a patched coverlet and but little underneath it; and the other with some scanty bits of sackcloth to cover its defects. In these two beds the parents and their half-dozen children (five boys and a girl) contrived somehow to sleep. Possibly, for warmth's sake, close quarters were endurable; for the walls seemed hardly weather-tight, and in the ceiling also the bare laths were

revealed. “Well, yes, it do drip through a bit,” the man was free to own, after telling us that he paid four shillings weekly for his rent, and that the landlord had promised to look to the repairs. “Look to 'em? Well, yes, you see, he do look in a' times and give us a look round. But if we so much as p'int to 'em, he 'ooks it pretty quick.”

One of the window-panes was broken, and mended with a bit of newspaper, which, however, hardly served to keep the wind out. I remarked that as the room was little more than ten feet square, and there were nightly eight to sleep in it, perhaps it was as well to have a little ventilation. Plenty of fresh air was a famous thing for health, and there was nothing so unwholesome as a close and stuffy bedchamber.

“Well, sir,” observed the man with rather a grim smile, “I don't think as you'd much complain o' feeling stuffy if you was to sleep here a bit. We ain't in want of air, scarce, with a door as hardly shuts and a windy as half closes. Nor yet we ain't much short o' water neither, leastways when it rains we ain't, with a roof as is half rotten and about as full o' holes as an old collander. An' were a jolly good frost to come, we wouldn't be over warm neither. Ah, you may well say it's a blessing that we're having a mild winter. If it had been a hard one, God knows what would ha' become of us. It's a precious bad time that we're a having as it is, but if we've a month's frost you'd better put me in my coffin. I ain't a lazybones, I ain't, nor yet a lie-a-bed, I ain't neither, now am I, Mr. Austin? You've knowed me for some years now, and you ain't caught me a skylarkin', no, nor yet a lushin' neither, not but what I likes a drop o' beer when I've been workin' 'ard and I've a few spare coppers 'andy. But it's precious few they are just now, and tidy hard to get, and a pint o' beer's as sca'ce here as a pinch o' baccy.”

I asked him how he earned his livelihood when he could not get the stuff for fish-baskets; whether, for instance, he had ever been working at the docks, and whether there was much of a scramble for admittance, for I had heard of a man being sadly hurt while in the crowd there. “Shouldn't wonder, sir,” he answered. “You see it's this way, just at present. There's a hunderd of 'em waiting, and there's forty or so wanted. An' the weak 'uns gets the wall, and the strong 'uns gets

the work. Seen 'em? Yes; I've seen 'em and I've been among 'em too, scores an' scores o' times, I have. It's a reg'lar knock me down for labour is the docks. And what with all the waitin', I declare, sir, it don't pay. It's heart-breakin', it is, to stan' there 'most all day, an' never get a job, and then come home without a copper, and find the children all a cryin' and a sobbin' for their supper, and most like they an' their mother too ain't 'ad not a mouthful nor a mossel, not since yest'day. Work? Look here, sir, I ain't afraid o' work, nor I ain't no ways proud neither. In the way of a day's work, I'd put my hand a'most to anythin'; Mr. Austin 'll tell you that, sir. Yes, an' there's thousands such as me, too, down here in the East, there is. An' what I says, as it's hard lines on a man as have a family to keep, an' is willin' enough to work for 'em, and then to go from week's end unto week's end, an' not get none."

Here my guide mildly interposed a hint that State-helped Emigration perhaps might prove a remedy, by ridding the East End of its surplusage of labour. "But look here, Mr. Austin, it's like this way," said the basket-maker. "The more there goes away, the more there comes to fill the gaps. See here now, sir. Last month about five hundred was shipped off to Horsetrailier. Well, thinks I, a good riddance. There'll be fewer mouths to fill, and fewer hands to work here now. But last week there come about a thousand from abroad, an' they all landed at the docks, an' here they seem to stick, and it's mostly Polish Jews they are."

The few last words he added with something of a snort, as though the creed and foreign country had made the grievance worse, and the presence of these immigrants in Stepney still more odious. Perhaps his temper might have led him to speak harshly of the strangers, whose arrival he lamented, had not my guide enquired if he were coming to the Hall next Sunday morning. "Well," replied the basket-maker, with as straightforward a look as his one eye would allow him, "I'd be willin' enough to come an' hear a bit o' gospel. It alls seem to do me good, and make me feel the better, though perhaps I mayn't quite rightly understand it. Though you seem to put it plain, too; I'm not denyin' that, sir. But you see, sir, I ain't proud, still I ain't one to be sneered at. Now, just see this old coat o' mine. It's the only one I got, and there ain't much of a go-to-meetin' sort of cut about it. I

don't think as you'd fancy being seen in it o' Sundays, an' 'specially by daylight."

There was a twinkle in his eye as he said this, which seemed the outward sign of much inward hilarity. "But, sir," continued he, "my missus, she'll be there. She alls somehow manages to rig herself up tidy, though she ain't one to spend a farden upon finery. But she's alls neat, she is, leastways on a Sunday. An' she'll come in the morning, sir, 'cause one of us must stay at home to mind the little 'uns. And—well, yes—perhaps you'll see me in the evening, 'cause after dark, you know, an old coat ain't much noticed."

Ah, my friend, thought I, as I shook him by the hand, on bidding him farewell, many a well-off man makes many a worse excuse for not going to morning service, than the want which you allege of a decent coat to go in.

Leaving, then, the basket-maker to look after his children, while seeing also to his work, as well as his one eye could perform the double labour, we emerged from the Gardens which had been so wrongly named, and continued to explore the wilderness of brickwork wherewith we were encompassed. But we had hardly proceeded fifty paces on our way, when suddenly my guide exclaimed—

Alas! my sheet is full, and I can only beg the reader, who would hear this sudden outcry, to wait for my next paper.

GEORGIE: AN ARTIST'S LOVE.

A STORY IN SIX CHAPTERS. CHAPTER III.

MRS. THOMPSON was very happy during the first days of their new acquaintanceship. Hers was that happiness peculiar to mothers when they think they have met a man able and willing to provide for the material requirements of their daughters. The son-in-law later becomes rather a despicable object than otherwise; but that is afterwards, when he is perhaps working hard to make both ends meet; the requirements of the wife generally increasing in exact proportion as any charms she may have once possessed diminish.

Never during her twenty-two years of life had Myra snubbed a man so little. At times she was almost gracious, and a graciousness so rare was indeed flattering, if Mr. Rentoul would only arrive at appreciating it. Poor Mrs. Thompson felt she would like very much to point it out to him.

But the artist was not altogether satisfactory. Mrs. Wright had spoken of

him as being dreamy-like; and charming as the anxious mother found him, and courteous and intellectual, there was certainly something provokingly vague and irresponsible about him.

Myra said that he had the mind of a poet; her mother did not dissent, and found herself going over the names of poets who had been practical enough to take unto themselves wives.

But as the days sped by, and each day brought with it an additional hour or so of the artist's society, a dreadful fear began to lie coldly on Mrs. Thompson—a fear which was accompanied by something very like a feeling of remorse; for was it not her doing that Georgie was with them? Georgie, with her untidy, fluffy hair, and blue eyes, and silly, bewitching ways!

Alas! Mrs. Thompson was old enough to know how few men there are who can resist utter silliness in a pretty woman.

The three young people were constantly together, for Georgie had lately developed much taste for out-of-door sketching. No more devouring of three-volume novels on the old staircase. Why interest herself in imaginary love-scenes and admiration? It was more amusing to be a heroine oneself than to read about one. It was not at the sound of Lucinda's or of Violet's voice that a grave, somewhat absent man was instantly attentive; it was not on their lightest, most trivial words that a presumably clever man hung, as if each syllable were disclosing some most precious truth.

It was not Lucinda, nor yet Violet, who could bring a sudden tender light to a pair of brown eyes with a smile, or a "Thank you," or a "Please do."

Mrs. Thompson had indeed cause for anxiety, but she could do nothing—could only sit passive and look on at things shaping themselves just as perversely and crookedly as they well could.

It was not only that a possible son-in-law was becoming every day less possible. That would have been a misfortune certainly, but, after all, one to have been borne; she had had, indeed, already some experience in bearing it.

Poor gentle woman! she had long tried to accept the fact that Myra was above mere commonplace matrimony, with its prosaic adjuncts of weekly bills, washer-women, and other domestic evils. Still, ever and anon, the motherly instinct would become strong within her, and she would feel as if nothing less than a son-in-law could give her true happiness.

And lo! most unexpectedly, in an out-of-the-way corner of the world, was a being as if created for no other purpose. An artist with charmingly radical ideas, well-read, earnest, and not conceited. A man who listened with respectful attention to Myra's most advanced opinions, who argued with her on abstruse subjects far beyond the ken of ordinary women, who appreciated her sketches, and generally paid homage to her genius.

To lose all hope of closer relationship with such a man was distinctly an evil, but there was worse than this.

With a mother's keen eyes, Mrs. Thompson had noted a change in Myra, an unwonted softness which almost approached humility. She did not insist upon giving the artist her opinion on every possible occasion. She asked for his very often instead. When engaged in conversation with him, she had not the air of being at the top of a very high mountain, talking to someone scrambling about at the bottom.

What could be inferred from signs so pregnant with meaning as were these, but that Myra was in love?

Poor Mrs. Thompson! poor Myra! poorer blind Mr. Rentoul! hateful Georgie! Such had become the sentiments of this disappointed mother.

It was late in the evening; Myra and her mother were still sitting over the fire. Georgie had gone up to bed. A tray on which were some empty tumblers was standing on the table. Mr. Rentoul had been spending the evening with them as usual. He had not long gone; he had said "Good-night" about five minutes after Georgie, declaring she was tired, had left them.

Mrs. Thompson had watched him open the door for her, but had not caught the low words he had spoken, as he bent over her for a moment. They might only have been "Good-night," but Mrs. Thompson had fancied they were more interesting. Georgie had smiled and blushed, and even Georgie was scarcely silly enough to change colour for a simple "Good-night."

The mother and daughter were silent, but they were both thinking of the same person. Mrs. Thompson, being the weaker, gave first utterance to her thought.

"Mr. Rentoul did not stay so late as usual this evening," she said, feeling her way a little.

"Did he not?" said Myra. "I suppose he is as tired as we are. Besides, really, Georgie gave rather a strong hint, making such a fuss about going to bed."

"Yes," assented Mrs. Thompson; and then, with some suddenness, the result of her nervousness: "Do you know, Myra, I almost regret having met Mr. Rentoul. I find myself awkwardly placed; there is something so vague about him. I don't quite like to ask him his intentions; he may not have any. Yet I can't help feeling I am in some way responsible."

Myra flushed a deep hard red, and looked straight at her mother.

"His intentions! Mother, how can you? What do you mean? Do you want to drive me away? Cannot a man and woman be decently civil to one another without laying themselves open to such degrading remarks? Mother, promise that you will say nothing of the sort to him."

Her voice was softer as she finished, dwelling a little on the personal pronoun. She was leaning forward in her excitement, and the firelight shone in her dark eyes.

"But, my dear, remember I am responsible to Mrs. Rickards, or Mrs. Sparkes, as she is now, and Georgie is such a child."

"Georgie!" repeated Myra; and then, becoming conscious of what her amazement implied, she grew a deeper red.

There was an awkward pause, but Myra was soon herself again. Her only fear had been self-betrayal. Georgie's name had been no revelation to her. She looked upon her as a pretty but very silly child, so utterly beneath the serious attention of a man such as Mr. Rentoul that she felt she could afford to smile at the very absurdity of her mother's idea.

"Mother, please say nothing of this to Mr. Rentoul or to Georgie. I know she is fond of admiration, and inclined to flirt, but I am quite sure there is no cause for interference. Mr. Rentoul looks upon her as a complete child. Have you not remarked how he treats her—how familiar he is? Sometimes I really think he believes her to be younger than she is."

Myra was so convinced that her view of the matter was the right one, that Mrs. Thompson almost let herself be persuaded into a like belief. It is so easy to make ourselves believe that which is pleasant to us. She fell asleep that night full of agreeable thoughts and delightful vague plans for the future. As a natural consequence, she dreamt that Myra was married.

But Myra's thoughts were not of so agreeable a nature. She had been disturbed, more than she could account for herself, by what her mother had said. She had also no great confidence in her mother's discre-

tion. She felt she could not rest until she had seen Georgie, and at once put her foot on any possible misconception. It would be a thousand pities to let Georgie get any false notions into her head. So, after hearing her mother turn the key in her door, she softly entered Miss Rickards's room.

Georgie was in bed, but awake, and she sat up, blinking a little, as Myra advanced upon her, candle in hand.

"What is the matter?" she asked, and stared in some amazement, for the girls were not on those terms of intimacy which encourage bedroom confidences.

"You are very young," Myra began, a little hurriedly. "I have more experience than you have. You must not be angry at what I am going to say."

Miss Thompson disposed of her candle and leaned against the foot of the bed. Georgie as yet felt nothing but surprise.

"You are such a child," Myra continued, her eyes resting on the little figure in its white nightdress and loosely falling hair. "You have been so short a time in England, you scarcely know our ways, perhaps. Georgie, I think you allow Mr. Rentoul to be too familiar with you. You are eighteen, remember. I know he treats you quite as a child, but you are not one in years. I am speaking for your good," she said more gently, as Georgie put up two small hands to hide her burning cheeks. "You might be sorry afterwards when it would be too late. Do not forget that even the best sort of man will take liberties with a girl entirely wanting in self-respect."

"Myra, don't!" gasped Miss Rickards. "What have I done? Why are you so cross to me?"

"I am not cross," returned Mentor impatiently; "but I only know that if you continue to allow Mr. Rentoul, or any other man, almost to lift you over stiles, as he did yesterday, you will end by being kissed or otherwise insulted. Good-night! That is all I have to say."

Miss Rickards made no response; her face was buried in the pillows.

Myra left her, not altogether displeased with the result of her good counsels.

The weather was still bright and frosty the morning following Myra's impromptu lecture; but the young lecturer had a bad headache—perhaps a result of last night's eloquence. Be that as it might, she lay in a darkened room; her mother and eau-de-cologne remained within call. Georgie was free to do exactly as she liked.

As sketching expedition had been planned, but Miss Thompson had sent a small note in her legible, characteristic handwriting, asking Mr. Rentoul to defer it.

The artist had come himself to express his sorrow at Miss Thompson's indisposition. He had only seen the elder lady, and was generally supposed to have set out with the intention of sketching on his own account.

Georgie stayed in the whole morning. It should not be said she was desirous of meeting Mr. Rentoul; indeed she was not, or so, at any rate, she was pleased to tell herself. Myra had impressed her; besides, she had an idea that the artist might have said something derogatory of her, and, after all, she was not entirely wanting in self-respect.

But after luncheon the inducement of a bright sun, and the clear crispness of a frost in the country, were stronger than that valiant resolution of keeping within doors.

She took the road towards Charmouth. The last time she had come along it she had been with Mr. Rentoul and Myra; they had brought skates, and had disported themselves the best part of a day on some wretchedly bad ice that is sometimes to be found just on the Charmouth coast. It is a small creek, formed by the sea, which is occasionally kind enough to freeze into uneven and, some people say, unsafe ice. On the other hand, it is very shallow, and there is no danger beyond that of a wetting.

On the day Georgie was thinking about there had been no mishap; it had all been very delightful. Myra had struck out with her usual energy by herself, leaving to Georgie the monopoly of helplessness, that womanly adjunct which is so charming to superior man. And Georgie had been very helpless indeed. She had clung to the artist's strong arm as to dear life; she had uttered sundry little cries, like some sweet, frightened bird; her colour had deepened, her blue eyes distended at the wonderful danger of being pulled swiftly along, she doing no more than standing upright on her skates and trusting herself to her teacher. Ah, it had all been very delightful! But no doubt he had been amusing himself with her. Certain words and looks that still dwelt in her memory meant nothing, then! It was a point of view as unpleasant as it was new. She had thought, if any distinct thought on the subject could be said to have entered her small head, that the

amusement had all been on her own side; any earnestness or passion on his.

She passed through Charmouth and stood on the edge of the cliff, looking down at the sea. Golden Cop was at her left, a view of the bay and old Cobb far away to her right; every outline stood out boldly in the clear frosty atmosphere. She heard a step, a glad exclamation of surprise, and she turned and shook hands with Mr. Rentoul, who, with his little artist's knapsack on his back, was coming from the direction of Chidcock. He was so glad to meet her that she found his cordiality contagious, and forgetting all her recent resolutions, was soon chattering away, and smiling and blushing just as usual.

They stood looking at the view for some time, and then Georgie announced that she was going down to the sea, and began descending the most precipitous part of the cliff.

"Take care!" he cried. "If you will come a little farther this way there are some steps."

But she went on, disregarding, wilful, and laughing. She thought it very nice to have the power to frighten him.

He looked on a moment in silence, and then he too began the descent, but he did not follow in Georgie's footsteps, and soon passed her. She saw him springing lightly and easily from rock to rock far beneath her.

Her progress was much more slow. However, she at length found herself on a sort of table of rock, some feet from the beach, where Mr. Rentoul was standing looking up at her. There was a provoking smile on his face.

Miss Rickards felt she could not, if she would in the smallest degree preserve her dignity, descend from her present position.

She turned and began to retrace her steps. In her haste, she stumbled and almost fell.

"Miss Rickards—Georgie, it is no use going back," he called out from below. "You will only come to dreadful grief of some sort."

This time Georgie was not wilful. It was not very amusing to tumble about slippery rocks by herself. She came to the edge of the shelf of rock, and prepared to spring into the pair of strong arms held out to receive her.

"One, two, three!" he cried. At three he was holding her in his arms, and he was apparently in no particular hurry to loosen his hold. Looking down at her, a swift

temptation assailed him, and, man-like, he gave in to it at once. He bent over her suddenly, and pressed his lips to the most accessible part of her cheek.

The next moment she was free, and was standing in front of him with burning face.

"How dare you!" she cried, Myra's words coming back to her with a rush.

"You said I might help you," he answered.

"It was rather a savage way," said the girl, the bright colour still deeper than usual on the soft skin, an angry glitter in the clear eyes.

But he only looked at her, and laughed a low, tender laugh of possession.

"My darling, you did not mind. Confess now you rather liked it." He went over to her as she stood leaning against the rock and tried to take her hands. She tore them away.

"No, I did not like it; I hated it!" she cried passionately; "and you are not a gentleman."

She paused and looked at him. Her words had rung out so distinctly in the frosty air, and it seemed to her about the most cutting thing she could say. What effect would they have? She had read queer stories of mad love turning at a moment's notice into hatred even more mad. They were in about the most solitary part of the pretty winding Devonshire coast, and there was the sea close at hand. Visions of a new version of Delaroche's Christian Martyr came into her mind. It was a pity she had so much fur about her. It might give her a dragged, drowned-cat sort of appearance. She looked at him full of these tragic thoughts, and remained staring in utter amazement at his proceedings.

He had fallen back two or three steps, and was gazing at her, his head slightly on one side, through half-shut eyes. There was not the slightest expression of resentment on his face.

"Don't move. There, that is perfect!" and he held up his walking-stick horizontally between them, shutting one eye entirely.

Enlightenment dawned upon her. She went out of position abruptly. Was it possible he had not heard those words, to her so awfully distinct, or was this only overacted indifference? How was she to convey to this dense and withal charming man her indignation and contempt.

"Why did you move, Georgie? You have no idea, against that background of dark rock, what a pretty picture you made.

Still, I think I have it fixed in my head, except perhaps the position of the right arm, Would you mind posing again just for a moment?"

She was speechless. Tears and laughter were both equally and dangerously near; either would have meant an ignominious defeat. Oh, for Myra's height, her dignity, her power of keeping people at a distance! Why did men—that man in particular—treat her as some child, to be spoiled, and petted, and insulted at will?

She turned quickly and began walking away. She had reached the narrow, slippery steps in the cliff before he overtook her.

"What is the matter, Georgie? You are not really angry? What, tears! What is the meaning of this?" he asked tenderly.

Were there tears? She had not known it. With a tan-coloured glove she brushed them hastily away, and then she stopped and faced him.

"The meaning, sir, is that you have insulted me, and that I wish never to speak to you again. What do you take me for? Is it because I am so"—she paused, and then remembering Myra's impressive remarks as to her youth, continued, "so young that you treat me as if I were a shop-girl?"

"I insulted you! I!" he repeated, bewildered, but in another instant, recollection coming to him, he smiled—yes, actually even then dared to smile.

"My dear," he said gently, "why are you so foolish as to talk about things you don't understand? I could never insult you, my little Georgie, my little wife who is to come and make my whole life glad. Georgie, my darling, don't you see that such a thing is impossible? Don't you know that I love you?" As he had spoken, his voice had deepened, and there was that in his face no woman—not the veriest novice—could mistake.

Georgie was trembling, and her heart was beating fast and strong. Ah, why was there no one by to tell her that life is not prodigal of its treasures—no one to warn her not to trifle with the happiness of a lifetime? She was but a child, and words were still to her little more than words. She was scarcely even conscious that she loved this man, who was looking at her so gravely.

Myra's warning was fresh in her memory: "The best sort of man will take liberties with a girl entirely wanting in self-respect." Myra was right—but let her,

poor, weak little Georgie, show, even at the eleventh hour, that those words of counsel have not been altogether thrown away. Let her prove to this man that she was not so utterly deficient in womanly pride as not to resent being played with.

She looked up at him. If it was play, it had surely but little merriment about it. But there is the thought of his recent conduct to harden her, and she said words neither of them could ever forget.

It was over. The girl was crimson with excitement, and perhaps want of breath; it would need but little to produce tears, and sobbing reconciliation.

The man was very white and stern-looking, and his words had the calming effect of cold water.

"It is only left for me to ask your pardon, Miss Rickards. I am very sorry to have caused you so much annoyance. It has all been a great mistake, but," here he paused for a moment, "I must ask you to believe that no insult was intended." Then, with a slight change of tone: "Had you not better be thinking of getting home? It will soon be dark."

"But you are coming?" faltered the girl. Her heroic mood had melted with most unheroic rapidity, and she was longing to make up.

"Yes, of course," he answered, not looking at her.

They then proceeded to mount the narrow, almost perpendicular steps, Indian-file, and in silence.

The steps were slippery with frozen snow. Georgie stumbled once or twice; if it had not been for the strong man close behind her she would have fallen.

When at length they stood on terra-firma, the long white road winding away into cold mist before them, the sun a distant red ball sinking into the west, Georgie, thinking of the long, cold walk home, and of how its discomfort would be aggravated if her companion remained so cross, held out a small hand, and murmured something weak about being friends.

Perhaps it was the thickening mist that prevented him from seeing, or was he looking another way? At any rate the hand retreated into the muff without having

touched his, and thoroughly chilled for its foolishness.

They walked some hundred yards well apart, when he suddenly stopped.

"Do you not hear the sound of wheels?" he asked, and without waiting for an answer he pulled out his watch, and informed her that it was just the time the Chiddcock coach was due. "You had better get in, if there is room," he continued. "You can't walk fast enough to keep yourself properly warm."

"And you?" very softly.

"Oh, I shall walk, make a short cut across the fields probably. If you get out at the top of the High Street you will only have that short piece of hill to walk alone up to Holy Mount. You do not mind?"

No, she did not mind. His desire to be rid of her was too evident, too humiliating for her to express any sort of wish as to the manner of her homeward journey.

And so the coach was stopped, and Georgie was handed, or rather pushed in, with the united efforts of Mr. Rentoul and the benumbed conductor, across the knees of half-a-dozen sturdy countrywomen, whose mingled breath gave an unpleasant damp feel to the atmosphere. After several false starts, and the noise of horses' sliding feet, the coach was off.

Georgie, after making an ineffectual attempt to brush a seeing place in the thickened panes with her muff, shrank away into her corner behind her furs. Oh, to be walking home, with even the width of the road between them, and the possibility of forgiveness!

Later in the evening Mrs. Thompson, with uplifted finger and hushed breath, met her, a tired, half-frozen, dejected little mortal, on the staircase.

"Don't make a noise, dear; Myra has just gone to bed, her head is still very bad. What makes you so late?"

"I don't know," murmured Georgie, on the point of crying, partly from fatigue and cold, partly from other causes. "I am very tired; I think I shall go to bed too."

And for all answer to Mrs. Thompson's look of surprise, she escaped upstairs to her room.

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